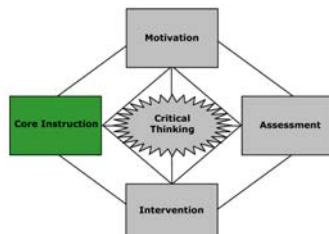


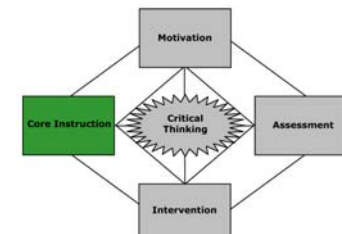
School Effectiveness
K-12 Literacy

**The Arizona Department of Education
Comprehensive Literacy Framework**



Core Instruction

We must teach content through thinking,
not content, and then thinking.
~ Elder & Paul ~



Content literacy not only encompasses the ability to read, write, listen, and speak intelligently within the context of an academic discipline, it also encompasses the ability to think critically. Critical thinking is fundamental to the effective teaching of any subject, for every subject is grounded in a particular way of thinking, in a particular way of viewing the world. Moreover, the process of developing a knowledge and understanding of any subject necessarily depends on thought. One of the most important abilities that a thinker can have is the ability to monitor and assess his or her own thinking while processing the thinking of others (Elder & Paul). Since text is a primary means for communicating ideas and concepts, reading, writing, and thinking critically are integral to effective core instruction.

A recent study by the National School Boards Association concluded that the more than 540,000 students who drop out of school each year leave the education system because they can't read well enough to succeed—even marginally—in high school (2004). As well, an increasing number of students who do stay in school and who continue on to the workplace and/or college cannot read well enough to meet the rigor of the texts they encounter (ACT, 2007). Still other studies indicate that even in the case of good

readers, by 7th grade, reading development slows to such a great extent that by 8th grade, and through to the end of 12th grade, no measurable development takes place (Francis, et al., 1996). In light of such research findings, the ability to read and think critically about content-specific ideas has become more important than it ever has been before.

The Arizona Department of Education Comprehensive Literacy Framework aligns with current research in the view that students' mastery of "The Big Five" reading concepts (phonemic awareness, phonics, fluency, vocabulary and comprehension) is an on-going process that builds over time upon increasingly more complex and demanding text. The process begins with primary literacy instruction in the early grades; it continues through content literacy instruction in middle school and high school; and it extends into college and beyond through self-directed application and practice. In order to be successful, therefore, middle and high school students must continue to develop the fluency, vocabulary, and reading comprehension skills that they will ultimately need in college and the workplace.

The Comprehensive Literacy Framework also supports the idea that content-area teachers possess the substantive knowledge of the concepts and principles that lie at the heart of their disciplines. As experts in their fields, teachers of English language arts, mathematics, science, and social studies are specialists who know what it means to read, write, listen, speak, and think philosophically, mathematically, scientifically, and historically. Consequently, content-area teachers are the ones *best* suited to teach content literacy.

The Core Instruction component of the Comprehensive Literacy Framework addresses core literacy instruction at grades K-3 and core content literacy at grades 4-12 by providing:

- current research into reading instruction
- strategies for teachers
- an annotated bibliography of professional articles
- professional development opportunities
- links to relevant ADE resources

Sources:

ACT. Rigor at Risk: Reaffirming Quality in the High School Core Curriculum. Iowa City: ACT, 2007.

Denton, Carolyn. "Closing the Achievement Gap: Possibilities and Challenges." Desert Canyon Summer Institute, Tucson. 1 June, 2007.

Foundation for Critical Thinking. "The Critical Thinking Community," 2007. < <http://www.criticalthinking.org/>>.